

Cultural Studies in Turkey: The State of the Art

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Recent socio-political developments have rendered cultural studies of the Republic of Turkey an ever-widening field of study, as they lead apparently to a probable paradigm shift in a society that was once thought to be purely Western-oriented. The analysis of this transformation is before all else a cultural studies task. Accordingly, this paper has two aims: one, to make a a brief survey of cultural studies work that has been done so far in Turkey; and two, draw attention to the increasingly heterogeneous character of cultural studies in the country. Indeed, cultural studies in Turkey is marked by a phenomenon: there is a pronounced “divorce” between “Anglophone” Turkish scholars and “merely Turcophone” ones.

CULTURAL STUDIES IN TURKEY: THE STATE OF THE ART

Recent socio-political developments have rendered cultural studies of the Republic of Turkey an ever-widening field of study. Since the accession to power of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party in the autumn of 2002, cultural allegiances and pacts of forgetting, whether they be ethnic, religious or ideological, are being realigned, restructured or renegotiated. The imperatives of globalization collude, leading apparently to a probable paradigm shift in a society that was once thought to be purely Western-oriented. Questioning both the foundational maxims and the insistent new requests has become a cultural studies task.

This leads perforce to another, even more immediate task, that of taking a close look at cultural studies in Turkey. This essay aims accordingly to present the current state of cultural studies in the country. It discusses the history of cultural studies instruction and practice in Turkey and notes the existing university programs, then examines the major problems facing the practice of cultural studies in Turkey today. It is hoped that the information it provides would serve as reference for anyone interested in the subject.

This essay argues moreover that the current state of cultural studies in Turkey renders it somewhat incapable of appraising fully the present situation in which Turkey finds itself.

FROM ITS BEGINNING TO ITS PRESENT STATE

1. British Council Courses

As noted at the beginning of an article on the education and practice of cultural studies in Turkey by Ayşe L. Kirtunç and the writer of these lines, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact time when cultural studies began in Turkey as scholars who became cognizant of the “cultural turn” applied its methodology in the courses that they gave long before any formal departmentalization, or opening of courses so labeled occurred (see Pultar and Kirtunç 2004). It is a fact, however, that the British Council representation in Turkey began in 1992 in Istanbul “British cultural studies” courses. As Laurence Raw, one of the instructors, explains, the courses were “9-month courses on British and Comparative Cultural Studies, including units on nationalism, multiculturalism, class, gender and race. Very British-focused, with topics of little interest to local audiences (e.g. class); however, the Council did offer scholarships for students to go and complete an MA in Warwick.”¹ The courses were given originally by, besides the Briton Raw, employed at the time at the British Council, two Turkish academics, Cambridge-educated Cevat Çapan, professor of English language and literature currently at Yeditepe University in Istanbul, and the late Cem Taylan (d. 2001), also a professor English language and literature, who was teaching at the Western Languages and Literatures department of Boğaziçi University (see Raw and Taylan 1993 on their experience of teaching these courses). The British Council started in 1993 courses in Ankara, taught originally by Can Abanazır of the Department of English Language and Literature at

¹ One of the students, Derviş Zaimağaoğlu, received one of these and completed his MA degree in Warwick (Raw, e-mail message to author, 26 August 2011). Cyprus-born Boğaziçi University graduate Zaimağaoğlu would go on to become, as “Derviş Zaim,” a well-known director, with such award-winning feature films as *Tabutta Rövaşata* (*Somersault in a Coffin*, 1996), *Filler ve Çimen* (*Elephants and Grass*, 2000) and *Gölgeler ve Suretler* (*Shadows and Faces*, 2010). He would also co-direct with the Greek Cypriot Panicos Chrysantou the documentary *Parallel Trips* (2004) “in which the two directors, from opposite sides of the divided island of Cyprus, recorded the human dramas that unfolded during the war of 1974 and the legacy that remains today” (“Derviş Zaim”). For an interview Raw conducted with his former student, see the chapter “Derviş Zaim: 'To Return to the Past Means Embarking on a New Journey'” in his *Exploring Turkish Cultures* (2011).

Hacettepe University. Then in 1995 the British Council started such courses in Izmir; these were taught originally by Oxford-educated Pete Remington teaching at the time at the American Culture and Literature² department of Ege University, and Andrew Fletcher. These courses were

“organized in collaboration with the U of Warwick, Centre for British and Comparative Cultural Studies (which later became the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies before being closed in 2007),” as Raw indicates (e-mail message to author, 26 August 2011).

Along these courses and “initially planned as a resource for comparative cultural material” (Raw, e-mail message to author, 26 August 2011). the British Council representation in Turkey started a cultural studies website entitled “CSSG Cultural Studies Study Group” (<<http://warlight.tripod.com/>>) maintained by [the Turkish] Cenk Erdil, and last updated on 16 September 1999. Listed at the top of the webpages of the site is “Cultural Studies in Turkey.”

“The program came to an end in 1999,” as Raw puts it, “when the then Director of the British Council decided to put all their money into English Language Teaching, and opened a Teaching Center in Istanbul” (Raw, e-mail message to the author, 26 August 2001).³

2. *Ege Cultural Studies Symposium*

The American Studies Association of Turkey (ASAT) organized in the spring of 1995, on 10-11 April 1995 to be exact, a two-day “cultural studies” seminar at Ege University, in collaboration with the American Culture and Literature department of that university. Sociologists in Turkey may perhaps uncover other roots for the beginnings of cultural studies in this country; for the writer of these lines, one source, if not *the* one, is the work initiated by Americanists, among them then three active members of ASAT: Gülriz Büken (then member of the Department of History at Bilkent University, president of ASAT 1994-2011), Ayşe Lahur Kırtunç (then member of the Ege University American Culture and Literature department, and later its Chair), and Gönül Pultar, the writer of these lines (then member of the Department of English Language and Literature at Bilkent University, vice-president of ASAT 1994-2000, founding editor-in-chief of *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* [JAST] 1994-1995, and later founding president of the Cultural Association of Turkey 2005-present). These scholars were cognizant of the cultural turn through not only their individual interests and international contacts but also their association with such colleagues as Raw, who taught at Bilkent University before integrating the British Council, and Remington, teaching at the Ege University American Culture and Literature department, as well as younger colleagues who were returning from postgraduate studies they pursued in universities in the West where they had specialized in cultural studies.⁴

² This is what American studies is formally called in Turkey.

³ Raw remarks that the English language Teaching Centre in Istanbul “was closed three years later, as the Turkish government objected to a British Embassy-sponsored organization challenging their language schools. Since then the Council has done absolutely nothing to promote British interests, while Cult Studs has lost a lot of its edge within UK, especially after the closing of the Birmingham Centre & the Warwick Centre” (e-mail message to the author, 26 August 2011).

⁴ Such a young scholar was Boğaziçi University graduate İrem Balkır (1965-2006) who received a doctoral degree in Cultural and Critical Studies from the University of Pittsburgh in 1993 and joined the Department of American Culture and Literature at Bilkent University in 1994. Balkır, who initially was immediately adopted by the American studies community in Ankara, made an ASAT member and elected to its executive committee, meanwhile attended and presented many papers at ASA and MELUS conferences in

The Ege April 1995 seminar took place in one auditorium only, with solicited presenters delivering papers to an audience made up of interested faculty members, guest faculty from neighboring 9 Eylül University, and students probably compelled to attend. Titled “The Red, the Black and the White,” it was an exercise in US ethnic studies.⁵ By common accord, it was decided it would be repeated on a larger scale, and Ege University through the person of Prof. Seçkin Ergin, then Chair of its Department of American Culture and Literature, agreed to play host to it annually. Kırtunç took over the responsibility of the organization of what was to become a symposium, in fact a full-fledged conference, and the next year, tapping into her own international contacts and network of colleagues, announced it world-wide, with the due call for papers and all the paraphernalia.⁶ The number of participants of this first Ege University International Cultural Studies Symposium, organized in 1996, immediately rose to almost 150.

Dubbed CSS - Cultural Studies Symposium, and organized in the month of May annually until 2005, the conference has since been organized biannually. Titled “Change and Challenge,” the “Ege University 13th International Cultural Studies Symposium” took place on 4-6 May 2011. Proceedings volumes to have come out so far are *Crossing the Boundaries: Cultural Studies in the UK and US* (1997) edited by Raw, Büken and Günseli Sönmez İşçi (then chair of the Ege University Department of English Language and Literature, and co-organizer of CSS the first few years); *The History of Culture: The Culture of History* (1998) edited by Raw, Büken and İşçi; *Popular Culture(s)* (1999) edited by Büken, Raw and İşçi; *Dialogue and Difference* (2000) edited by Raw and Kırtunç; *New Cultural Perspectives in the New Millennium* (2001) edited by Kırtunç, Büken, Raw and Rezzan Silkü; *Globalization and Transcultural Issues in the New World Order* (2001) edited by Remington, with İşçi and Büken as advisory editors; *Selves at Home, Selves in Exile: Stories of Emplacement and Displacement* (2003) edited by Kırtunç, Atilla Silkü, Kenneth W. Rose and Murat Erdem; *Inside Outside In: Emotions, Body and Society* (2005) edited by İşçi, Dilek Direnç and Züleyha Çetiner Öktem; *[City in (Culture)] in City* (2005) edited by Kırtunç, Eleftheria Arapoglou and Erdem; *When Away Becomes Home: Cultural Consequences of Migration* (2007) edited by İşçi, Direnç and Gülden Hatiboğlu; and *Memory and Nostalgia* (2009) edited by A. Silkü, Erdem and Patrick Folk. The first four volumes were published by the British Council; the fifth one (*New Cultural Perspectives in the New Millennium*) was co-published by ASAT and the two departments involved; and the remaining ones were published by Ege University.

As can be seen from the titles (which are also the titles of the symposia), CSS was focused at first on Anglo-American topics, and conducted solely in the medium of instruction of the organizers, i.e. English.⁷ However, the Turkish element seeped in quickly. Papers on Turkish themes found a place in the symposia, and subsequently in their proceedings—a state of affairs that was only natural for a discipline such as cultural studies that is by definition inimical to boundaries. Thus, an audience basically made up of Turks found themselves listening to papers in English on purely Turkish topics. A case in point is the paper presented

the USA, and also served as Acting Chair of her department from 1997 to 1999, was adamant to her dying days of *not* being an Americanist but a cultural studies scholar.

⁵ Five scholars, among them the writer of these lines, presented papers and films on Native Americans and African Americans.

⁶ This first Ege symposium was organized by, besides ASAT and the Ege University Department of American Language and Literature, the Department of English Language and Literature of that university, with the British Council through Raw and the USIS (United States Information Service), as it was called then, through contacts the ASAT presidency had among its officials, acting as sponsors, funding the trips to Turkey of keynote speakers from their respective countries.

⁷ The biannual conferences and their proceedings feature, in contrast, papers/essays in Turkish as well.

by sociologist Nuran Erol in 1999 on *arabesk* music⁸ (see her “Arabesque Culture as a Metaphor of the World in Turkish Society” in *Dialogue and Difference*). The discussion that ensued, on a purely Turkish predicament, was conducted in English by Turkish participants—and seemed incongruous.

It is basically to remedy this incongruity that a group of scholars got together in the fall of the same year in Ankara to form a “Group for Cultural Studies in Turkey.”

3. *The Group for Cultural Studies in Turkey / Cultural Studies Association (of Turkey)*

As noted above, the formation of this group originated from the Izmir conferences, and among its (eleven) members⁹ were several scholars who had been organizing and/or attending CSS. The feeling that led to forming a group was that if cultural studies is to be pursued in Turkey on matters to do with Turkish culture, it should be done first and foremost in Turkish. One other consideration, conscious or not, may have been, although this was never openly voiced, the wish to extricate cultural studies in Turkey from the monopoly of the British. To my knowledge, none of the members, except for Laurence Raw perhaps, knew that the British Council had terminated its courses. The webpage was there (and still is), apparently provided by the British, with the ambiguous “Cultural Studies in Turkey” heading.

Almost all the members of the Group had had prior experience in associations, and the general feeling at first was that this inter-university group could hold out without formalizing its existence. This was without counting with the need to ask for funding. When The Turkish Science and Technology Foundation (TÜBİTAK) started to give out funds for which the Group could apply for its conferences, there was no way but to become institutionalized. Thus *Kültür Araştırmaları Derneği* (KAD, Cultural Studies Association) was founded in March 2005, in Istanbul where Gönül Pultar, who had been elected Chair of the Group at its second meeting in November 1999, had moved (see <www.kulturad.org>). As there was no radical break from “group” to “association,” this essay will consider the activities of the two together (see the chapter “Recognizing Difference: Interdisciplinarity and the Cultural Studies Association” in Raw 2011).

CONFERENCES AND COLLECTIONS OF ESSAYS

The Group, which started meeting once a month, began its activities very modestly with a two-day seminar, with solicited speakers and invited participants, on the subject of migration in early summer 2000 at METU, organized by Group member Yıldırım Yavuz. It then launched what was to become biannual conferences, with the one in Kemer, Antalya in fall 2001 entitled, as translated into English, “Modernity and Culture.” The book which came out

⁸ A type of music generated on the fringes of the mainstream, reflecting the woes of the migrants from rural areas to big cities.

⁹ Besides Büken (since then retired from Bilkent University), Kırtunç, Pultar (since then retired from Bilkent University, currently the president of KAD) and Raw (who moved to Başkent University in Ankara after his job at the British Council was over), there were: professor of sociology Bahattin Akşit (at METU at the time, now at Istanbul's Maltepe University), Central Asian studies scholar Çiğdem Balım Harding (at Manchester University at the time, now senior lecturer at Indiana University), Mutlu Binark (at Ankara's Gazi University at the time, now professor of communication studies at Başkent University), anthropologist Emine O. İncirlioğlu (since then retired from Bilkent University, currently KAD's vice-president), professor of Turkish literature Talat Halman (Bilkent University, chair of the graduate Turkish Literature department, and now additionally Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Letters), professor of English language and literature Himmet Umunç (at Hacettepe University at the time, now head of the Department of American Culture and Literature at Başkent University), and professor of architectural history Yıldırım Yavuz (METU). Some of them have then become members of KAD.

of it is *Kültür ve Modernite* (Culture and Modernity), edited by Pultar, Emine O. İncirlioğlu and Bahattin Akşit (both Group members) and published in 2003.

This was followed two years later by the, as translated into English, “Cultures of Turks / Cultures of Turkey” conference organized in the southeastern city of Van in 2003 jointly with Yüzüncü Yıl University. The book to come out was *Türk(iye) Kültürleri* (Cultures of Turks / Cultures of Turkey), edited by Pultar and Tahire Erman (METU), and published in 2005.

It is as KAD that a conference was held in 2005 jointly with Koç University (Istanbul) entitled, as translated into English, “Identity and Culture.” Two books came out: *Kimlikler Lütfen: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Kültürel Kimlik Arayışı ve Temsili* (Identities Please: The Search for and Representation of Cultural Identity in the Republic of Turkey) in 2009, and *Ağır Gökyüzünde Kanat Çırpma: Sovyet-sonrası Türk Cumhuriyetlerinde Kültürel Kimlik Arayışı ve Müzakeresi* (Batting Wings in Heavy Skies: The Search for and Negotiation of Cultural Identity in the Post-Soviet Turkic Republics, in press) on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Soviet Union, both edited by Pultar.

KAD also organized in Istanbul, in the fall of the same year (2005) a two-day seminar in collaboration with the Heidelberg-based MESEA (Society for Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas) entitled ““Ethnic Identity?: (Trans)National and (Bi/Multi/Poly)Cultural Aspects.” The book that came out of it, the collection of essays entitled *Imagined Identities: Identity Formation in the Age of Globalization*, edited again by Pultar, is forthcoming from Syracuse University Press.

The next year, KAD organized another conference, in the city of Kütahya (the ancient Kotyaion/Cotyaeum) in Western Anatolia, in collaboration with the municipality of that city. It was focused on a specific subject, “Idil (Volga)-Ural Studies” as translated into English, on the culture of the ethnic groups of the Volga-Ural region (home to the three autonomous Turkic republics of Chuvashstan, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan) within the Russian Federation. The working languages of this international conference were Turkish, English, Russian and Tatar.

The next biannual KAD conference, entitled “E/Im/Migration” took place in 2007 in Şile, a suburb of Istanbul, organized this time with Işık University, boasting of a campus directly on the sea in that popular sea resort town. It was followed in 2009 by a conference in the Black Sea city of Zonguldak (famed for its coal mines), in collaboration with the Karaelmas (Black Diamond) University in that city, entitled, as translated into English, “Black Diamond 2009: Media and Culture.” Its proceedings were published the same year as *Karaelmas 2009: Medya ve Kültür*, edited by Nurçay Türkoğlu (Marmara University), a member of the Executive committee of KAD at the time and organizer of the conference, and Sevilen Toprak Alayoğlu (Marmara University).

The last biannual KAD conference to date was organized on 8-10 September 2011 by vice-president İncirlioğlu. Entitled “Space and Culture” as translated into English, it was co-organized with Istanbul's Kadir Has University and took place at that university (housed in the buildings of a tobacco factory, in much the same way as the Norrköping campus). Over 250 participants attended.

CULTURAL STUDIES PROGRAMS IN TURKEY

It is also in the fall of 1999 that cultural studies formally appeared in the country's universities. Two graduate programs and one undergraduate program were opened at that time. They were followed in the coming years by the addition of a graduate component of the undergraduate program, and the opening of two other graduate programs.

Bilgi University

The privately-owned Bilgi University (established in 1996)¹⁰ opened an MA program in cultural studies. The medium of education of this university is English, but the program is announced as “bilingual” on its website (see “Program Structure” at its website at <http://pages.bilgi.edu.tr/graduates/ma-in-cultural-studies/default_eng.htm>). It features among its faculty Kevin Robins from the U.K., and Turkish intellectuals such as Murat Belge and Mete Tunçay, and the Armenian of Turkey Arus Yumul, as well as Ferda Keskin, organizer of the 2006 Crossroads conference in Istanbul and later president of the Association for Cultural Studies from 2008 to 2010.

The program has started publishing a cultural studies journal in 2011, the only one of its kind in Turkey at present. The bilingual *KÜLT* appears at present as more of a review than a purely scholarly journal, but with only one issue out, it is too early to make any judgment.

Boğaziçi University

The Department of Western Languages and Literatures at Boğaziçi University, a state university also with the medium of education in English,¹¹ opened an MA program in Critical and Cultural Studies (<<http://www.boun.edu.tr/Default.aspx?SectionID=652>>). The faculty is entirely made up of the department faculty, i.e. English language and literature and American studies scholars, and “[s]tudents whose undergraduate degrees are not in English Literature are required to take at least one elective course from the English Literature pool.”

Sabancı University

A third program, this time at the undergraduate level was opened simultaneously at Sabancı University (also opened in 1996), whose medium of education is also English. Its faculty features a few Westerners, among them the American Annedith Schneider who penned her initial experiences in an essay entitled “The Institutional Revolutionary Major? Questions and Contradictions on the Way to Designing a Cultural Studies Program in a New Turkish University” (2002).¹² The program is within the university's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). As the website of that faculty indicates, it is “[d]epartment-free by design” and “an interdisciplinary home to degree programs that range from visual arts and visual communication design to cultural studies, social and political studies through conflict analysis and resolution, economics and history” (<<http://fass.sabanciuniv.edu/about/our-vision>>). In other words, the students enrolled in this faculty do not major in any particular discipline, they receive a diploma in “arts and social sciences” at the end of four years.

In the fall of 2010 the Sabancı cultural studies program started a MA program with “thesis” and “non-thesis” options. Ayşe Öncü, the professor of sociology who chaired the program until recently, said she had strived for years to obtain the graduate program as this

¹⁰ It was founded by Bilgi Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı (Bilgi [Knowledge/Information] Education and Culture Foundation) established in 1994 for that purpose, but was sold later to the Laureate International Universities Network (a company founded in 1998, with headquarters in Virginia, Maryland, USA). Laureate has since been trying to turn it into a profit-making vocational college shorn of any academic pretense, which means the future of cultural studies may not be too bright at that university.

¹¹ Robert College, the first American educational institution (incorporating a secondary school and a school of higher education) was opened in Bebek, on the Bosphorus, in 1863 during the Ottoman era. It was allowed to remain functioning after 1923 when the Republic of Turkey was founded, but was then split in the 1970s. A co-educational secondary school (İstanbul Amerikan Robert Lisesi) is still run by an American board, but the higher education facilities and faculty in Bebek were turned over at the time to the Turkish government who opened there the Boğaziçi (Bosphorus) University.

¹² On the subject of the cultural studies practice in Turkey as seen by another foreign scholar, both observer and involved practitioner, see Raw's “The Practice of Cultural Studies in the Turkish Republic” (2004).

would mean the cultural studies program was no more merely servicing the faculty, but was a department in its own right (private conversation with the author on 10 September 2011 at Kadir Has University, during the “Space and Culture” conference). Interesting are the research topics MA students have chosen, listed on the website, which include:

- “Independent/alternative artist initiatives” in contemporary Istanbul
 - Being a soldier’s mother in Turkey
 - The Turkish sub-genre of military coup narratives
 - Representations of “honor” among Turkish immigrant women in Berlin
 - The politics of Kurdish children and youth in urban space
 - Tourist gaze and tourist narratives in Southeastern Anatolia
 - Relations to the Western literary canon in Pamuk and Rushdie
 - Censorship on visual arts in contemporary Turkey.
- (<<http://cult.sabanciuniv.edu/program/graduate>>)

Middle East Technical University

An MA program in Media and Cultural Studies was opened at Middle East Technical University (METU), also a state university whose medium of education is English, in the fall of 2002 (<<http://www.mcs.metu.edu.tr/program>>). The scope is narrower as it focuses on various aspects of the media.

Şehir University

The İstanbul Şehir (City) University was opened in 2008 by a foundation (Bilim ve Sanat Vakfı – The Knowledge and Art Foundation).¹³ It started accepting its first students in the academic year 2010-2011. It has opened a graduate program in cultural studies and has collected scholars of caliber. Time will show how the program fares.

Problems Facing Cultural Studies in Turkey

With an active association regularly organizing biannual conferences and more; a(n) other biannual conference already become traditional organized by a major state university; graduate programs at four universities churning out each year new would-be scholars in the field, another newly-opened graduate program that has started instruction, and a journal devoted to the field that has started being published, cultural studies in Turkey appears to be “all set,” as the American colloquialism has it. In fact, the truth is far different, and cultural studies in Turkey is facing a number of problems that are summarized below.

Of course, cultural studies is currently faced with problems everywhere it is taught and practiced, as was quite apparent from the many papers presented by European scholars at the June 2011 ACSIS conference in Norrköping. I try below to highlight those that are particular to Turkey, that emanate from the characteristics of Turkish society. As will be seen, some of these problems are intertwined. Some are important, some are less so, but together they hinder the development of a much-needed perspective that only cultural studies can provide. I list seven which I believe need to be debated upon, even if no solution is found for them in the short term.

¹³ This foundation has been established by the Ülker company, known for its ties to the government of the Justice and Development Party (2002-present).

1. The lack of any “chair” in cultural studies. Although five universities carrying weight in different ways in the Turkish academia have opened the said programs, there is at present no “chair” in cultural studies. Academic promotion in Turkey runs thus: universities hire Ph.D.s and will confer on them the title of “assistant professor” at their own discretion. However, to become an “associate professor” (*doçent* in Turkish, from the German *Dozent*) a Ph.D., whether employed or not, is required to pass a state examination after a certain period of time¹⁴ following the reception of his/her doctoral degree. “Cultural studies” does not figure among the disciplines in which this examination may be entered. Those teaching cultural studies courses, whether in the above-mentioned departments/programs or in those not so named, pursue their formal careers in those disciplines that are recognized (i. e. sociology, anthropology, literatures in different languages, etc.). They would have adopted the cultural turn / acquired a cultural studies approach during the course of this career; nevertheless it is the demands of that career that take precedence at all times. Cultural studies is either neglected or altogether abandoned. A case in point is the example of the above-mentioned Raw who was one of the first ever instructors in cultural studies in Turkey: by his own confession, he turned to film studies and adaptation studies when the British Council ended its cultural studies courses (e-mail message to author, 26 August 2011).
2. Confusion in the terminology. There is moreover the issue of terminology: “cultural studies” is translated into Turkish in various ways. From the beginning KAD adopted *kültür araştırmaları*, a noun phrase formed according to long-established Turkish language rules; the five universities employ the adjective *kültürel* where the suffix *-el* is for Geoffrey Lewis (1920-2008) an imitation of the French *culturel* (2009: 124), which apparently sounds more “Western.” For *studies*, in opposition to KAD's *araştırmalar(ı)*, Sabancı, Boğaziçi, METU and Şehir employ *çalışmalar*, while Bilgi uses *incelemeler*. These words all mean “studies” and are alternately used at all times, with, however, *araştırmalar* first of all meaning *researches*, *çalışmalar* first of all meaning *works*, and *incelemeler* first of all meaning *examinations*.¹⁵ This situation creates a cacophony of a sort, as no one central fulcrum can be established. Boğaziçi University and METU offer degrees in one aspect each of cultural studies, and the other four (KAD and Bilgi, Sabancı and Şehir universities) are apparently doing different things, neither one wishing to seem to defer to any of the other(s).
3. The mis/use of “culture” as a term. The above-mentioned two problems may be seen to do with form. There are also problems with deeper ramifications. One has to do with the term *culture* itself. The word frightens because so much material that is purely political has been and still is presented as “culture” by ideologues of various hues in the country. Consequently, the man in the street tends to consider “culture” to herald subversive agendas, to be a veiled synonym e.g. for Kurds, or for some other “subversive” topic. The layman's attitude finds itself reflected in gatekeepers' behavior

¹⁴ The period depends on the legislation in force.

¹⁵ The American Studies Association of Turkey, known by its acronym ASAT, established in 1988, is called in Turkish “Amerikan Etüdüleri Derneği” where *etüdler* (a Turkish word derived from the French *études*) is employed for *studies*. It is interesting to note that the sensitivity developed since then concerning language has been such that the blatantly foreign sounding *etüdler*, which would have prevented any terminological confusion, is out of consideration for all parties concerned.

when e.g. allocating funds, deciding on the publication of texts or allowing for the organization of functions.

4. The “frightening” objective of cultural studies. On a more intricate level, it is the objective proper of cultural studies which frightens laymen and officials alike. As is known, just like with women's studies, the aim of the discipline of cultural studies is not merely to do scholarship but to reach the community, as cultural studies also inheres political criticism and activism. In other words, the work done should ideally be directed towards a political project, towards an improvement of the power relations that are taken up (i. e. questioned, criticized—denounced and decried, if I may put it more bluntly). The “overt political engagement” of cultural studies (Schneider 2002), is near to impossible in Turkey, as such a stance is immediately seized upon as anarchism or terrorism. Academics in Turkey have generally been “expected to stay out of politics,” as Schneider puts it, or else leave academia to pursue directly a political career.
5. The language divide. Cultural Studies in Turkey is characterized by a phenomenon: there is a pronounced “divorce” between “Anglophone” Turkish scholars and “merely Turcophone” ones. Western-educated Turkish scholars teaching in English-language media universities dwell in a world of their own, and have no time or interest in anything published in their subjects of specialization in Turkish, especially as most of these publications are “wanting” in APA or MLA rules. The disdain appears reciprocal, as scholars publishing in Turkish, whose professional formation is basically turcology (which embodies various branches of Turkish studies), tend to consider the authors of publications in English mostly ill-equipped to tackle such subjects. They consider moreover the publications themselves, when they are able to read them, as more often than not demonizing Turks and Turkey. As long as there is this rift, cultural studies in Turkey cannot develop adequately. I believe this is the most important hurdle cultural studies of Turkey in Turkey needs to overcome.
6. The abundance of material. As mentioned earlier, cultural studies knows no boundaries, and any scholar, whether a Turk or a foreigner can do research on any topic. The fact is that there is a lot of material that has remained untapped that needs to be seen to descriptively, to start with. So, many scholars who would be doing cultural studies are distracted by this material that needs to be dealt with traditionally. Put in another way, one cannot start work on criticizing museums (questioning their particular display of material, etc.) when studies on how museums should be organized have not been fully developed first.
7. One problem that is not discussed enough is the Turkish predicament of being both the hegemon and the subaltern. Depending on their political stance, scholars will adopt either one or the other view, but that is seldom the whole picture, so something is always missing, and the work ends up being not totally satisfactory. Those writing in English see Turkey as a Third World country and consider Turkish society in like manner, while those writing in Turkish start from the premise of the “glorious past.” Both attitudes may be justified in different cases, but the existing dichotomy is detrimental to the development of cultural studies in Turkey.

CONCLUSION

Cultural studies started in Turkey in the 1990s as a soft colonial project on the part of the U.K. couched as British Council activities. It was utilized in turn by the USA operating through its USIS office (since then become the office of the Cultural Counsellor of the US embassy in Ankara), especially through the annual American studies conferences it organized in “collaboration” with ASAT (whose foundation it had instigated), not only as a function of its propaganda machine, but also for its ulterior motives: the writer of these lines remembers many an American studies conference wrap-up session during the 1990s where suddenly the “Kurdish issue” flared up, seemingly out of nowhere, without even the aid of “transitional” terms indicating a comparison could be made with such and such American issue.

Reclaimed soon enough by Turkish scholars themselves, cultural studies developed over the years in Turkey, but encounters today a number of problems it needs to cope with if it is to develop further. Humanities and social sciences have been undervalued for long in a society that is trying to catch up on the Industrial Revolution. So, an offshoot such as cultural studies naturally also possesses a low status. Grants and funds easily available for “science” subjects are inexistent for humanities and social sciences, and consequently for cultural studies. However, what is particular in the case of cultural studies is a graver matter. Whether cultural studies is and should remain merely an approach or whether it is and should be a full-fledged academic discipline is an ongoing debate even in those Western centers where it first saw the light. Be that as it may, it is a fact that in Turkey an academic cannot pursue a career in cultural studies. Attracted at first by the intellectual challenge it offers, many bright young men and women soon seek fame and glory elsewhere, and they cannot be blamed. Turkish society rests on *power*, not *achievement*, and pays great importance to hierarchy and titles. The Ottomans, from whom evolved present Turkish society never instated hereditary titles; titles—of whatever character—need to be earned, and quickly, during one's own lifetime. Thus all academics doing what would be defined cultural studies make sure their work also suits the (mostly rigid) requirements of other, well-defined disciplines—which is more often than not the loss of cultural studies. As Schneider points out, even students themselves “show little inclination to take a course of study that, to their eyes, does not lead to a career” (2002).

Moreover, cultural studies in Turkey possesses a heterogenous character. One reason seems to be that it seems to follow a two-track path, as an apparently unsurmountable rift exists between those practitioners of it doing academic work in English, and those doing academic work in Turkish. The two “sector”s are to a great extent uncognizant of each other's work, so there is no adding up, no accumulation of scholarship. KAD was born out of the necessity of doing cultural studies in one's mother tongue, of examining everyday life in the everyday language of Turkey,¹⁶ and of coining terms that were until then inexistent. Yet those academics teaching in English-medium universities have been shunning it for the very same reason.¹⁷ Turkish seems the “vulgar” language as opposed to their “Latin”; and also, because their abstraction has been in English, they find it bothersome to have to translate or to coin new terms. Furthermore, those teaching in English-medium universities need to continue to

¹⁶ It eventually did introduce English partially as a working language, as foreign scholars working on Turkish subjects who were not in full command of Turkish yet wished to attend the conferences it organized started sending abstracts. Those young Turks of Germany who were born in Germany and did not know academic Turkish were also allowed to present their papers in English. In 2005 (at the “Identity and Culture conference), the plenary lectures given by Jacob Landau and Geoffrey Lewis (on pan-Turkism and the Turkish language reform respectively) were translated simultaneously for the participants. In 2011 (at the “Space and Culture” conference), when Edward Soja and Setha Low spoke in English, the funds allocated by TÜBİTAK were insufficient for (the high-priced) simultaneous translation, but no one in the audience objected.

¹⁷ Annedith Schneider of Sabancı University is the only one so far who has become a KAD member.

do work i. e. to publish in English, as in order to be promoted in their universities they need to be figured in journals indexed in the USA.¹⁸ Which automatically prevents any accumulation of knowledge and scholarship in cultural studies in Turkey. This covert neo-colonialism of the Western-educated mind is overlooked in the current discourse on globalization, and the implementation of such projects as the Erasmus program which assumes that all instruction under the sun may somehow be conducted in English.

One practical result is that those scholars who may not know English never get to benefit from the scholarship in English on their subjects, thus never become truly cognizant of the “cultural turn” and continue their production of theory-free work—for which there is more than abundant untapped material, as mentioned above. Yet the bulk of material that is the subject matter of potential cultural studies work is in their possession, so to speak. Most Western-educated academics teaching in English-medium universities are not graduates of Turkish history or literature or related subjects. They only bring the method, and of course the theoretical framework that is the basis of their work. But again, this theoretical framework is founded on Western theoreticians' ideas, and what they propound is not always relevant to the Turkish situation (see Pultar, “Küreselleşme Çağında Ezberler Bozulurken: Türk(iye Kültürleri ve Kuramsal Çerçeve Arayışları” [As Received Wisdom is Being Shattered During the Age of Globalization: Cultures of Turks / Cultures of Turkey and the Search for a Theoretical Framework] for a treatment of this and related issues).

Yet a more important point is that these ideas do not emanate from within, and so do not reflect the predicament (of e.g., being both “hegemon” and “subaltern,” as discussed above). There is as yet no cultural studies textbook in Turkish, nor perhaps is there any need for one. The five universities where it would/could be used as a regular student textbook are all English-medium universities. These universities all stress the interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies and the need for the students to acquire a critical, questioning stance. However, their main concern is, as I already co-wrote with Kırtunç, “training the students in the theories of the major figures of Anglo-centric cultural studies (with that of the ubiquitous French as part of its corpus) to allow them to 'perform,' namely, do research, teach, participate, in the international academic arena, as masterfully as all other international scholars” (Pultar and Kırtunç 2004), rather than forging Turkish cultural studies / cultural studies of Turkey. It is as if they have all been vested with cloaks of neo-colonization in which they are warm and cozy, cloaks that allow them to confront the chill of globalization on the same “platform” with Westerners.

On the other hand, many books by sociologists such as Göle, Şerif Mardin and Nermin Abadan-Unat, as well as by various scholars on media and communication that could easily be labeled cultural studies are categorized as texts of sociology, literature, etc. because of the rigid departmentalization that rejects interdisciplinarity, and does not recognize cultural studies on par with those conventional disciplines.

In the meantime Turkish society is changing fast. It is changing fast in the twenty-first century and requires analysts and theoreticians to make sense of the transformation, at a time when the radical alterations brought about by the Kemalist revolution and the establishment of the Republic in the twentieth century have not yet been sufficiently analyzed and put into perspective. The necessity of shedding the neo-colonized mantle, however cozy it may be, of moving beyond titles and labels, and doing substantial cultural studies in Turkey remains an acute issue.

¹⁸ The extreme in this conduct is probably that of Bilkent University in Ankara which does not deem publications in Turkish by its faculty worthy of consideration, and so does not list them on its website.

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